

Hisham says no but local police say yes to carolling permit requirement
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 11 — Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said this morning that Christmas carollers will not need police permits despite reports that local police insist their permission is required.

The home minister said on micro-blogging site Twitter at about 9.30am today that federal police have told him no permit is required by Christians organising their musical visits over Christmas.

“No need permit. Confirm by Bkt Aman,” he replied to a query by another “tweeter.”

The home minister and local police appear to be at odds over the permit requirement. — file pic

The Star had reported this morning that Deputy Home Minister Datuk Lee Chee Leong also said no permit was needed despite it being a requirement for the past 30 years.

But the newspaper also wrote that local police in Johor and Klang had insisted that carollers must apply for permits before going ahead with their visits.

Lee was quoted as saying in Sarawak yesterday no permit was required as more freedom has been given for religious activities in the spirit of the recently passed Peaceful Assembly Bill.

“No permit is needed for Christmas carolling. You don’t even need to inform the police,” the English-language daily quoted Lee as saying in Sarikei.

However, Johor police insisted that carollers must apply for permits two weeks before going ahead with their musical visits.

The newspaper quoted Johor police chief Deputy Comm Datuk Mohd Mokhtar Mohd Shariff as saying that organisers should inform the police on the number of participants, the places they planned to visit and the time.

The Malaysian Insider reported on Friday that the police were asking Christians for more details than usual this year including the full names and contact details of homeowners whom they intended to visit this carolling season.

But Pemandu minister Datuk Seri Idris Jala, who has been the government’s pointman on Christian matters, was also unsure and said yesterday Hishammuddin needed to look into the matter.

The Malaysian Insider had reported that parish priests in Klang were alarmed to receive a memo from a district police officer this past week informing them of the requirement.

They were also asked to provide Bukit Aman and the National Security Council with the same information, said a concerned Rev Father Michael Chua, who told The Malaysian Insider he received the news from the parish priests of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes

and the Church of the Holy Redeemer earlier this week.

The police denied yesterday restricting the movement of carollers in Klang despite changing the permit application process.

South Klang OCPD ACP Mohamad Mat Yusop said district police began interviewing carolling groups that have applied for permits this year because administration of the district has been split in two.

Putrajaya pushed a law earlier this month that outlawed street protests and also demonstrations near houses of worship, schools and other public areas, leading to concerns that the carollers are being lumped under the Peaceful Assembly Act 2011.

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